

The **Texas Teens for Legislative Change** was founded in 1999 by members of the Houston Chapter of the Texas Association of Addiction Professionals for the purpose of expanding the comprehensive voice to our state and national legislators around the plight of alcohol and drug addiction.

For years, addiction counselors had spent countless hours in congressional offices on the local, state and national levels educating and raising awareness about this disease, and to give a face to the millions of people who suffer from it. Moreover, to advocate for the need for increased funding allocation for prevention, education, intervention and treatment.

The idea to bring America's youth, ages 13-18, who are in recovery from alcoholism and substance abuse to Austin and Washington to speak directly to their legislative officials as to how their abuse of alcohol and drugs has affected their families, college, employment and their health, brought forth a level of bureaucratic acceptance that had not been realized before.

This grass roots effort hit the ground running in February, 2000, when the first group of recovering teens from Houston traveled to Washington. Annual trips to Austin and Washington continued through 2006, and the group expanded to include parents, school counselors, mentors and more. In addition to their legislative trips, the Texas Teens traveled around Texas attending numerous local and regional conferences to build strength for their cause and spread their message. By 2004, the Teens were meeting year round and sponsoring car washes and t-shirt sales to raise money to cover their travel expenses.

In 2005, the Teens were recognized for their tireless efforts by NAADAC: The National Association of Addiction Professionals, with the Rising Star Award.

After the trip in 2006, Founding Advisor Keith Liles retired and the group went on hiatus. It was certainly noticeable when they were not present for the annual advocacy events and after an almost two year absence, the group will return to participate in the 2009 NAADAC "Advocacy in Action" Day in Washington in March, 2009. The Texas Teens will take on a new focus, moving from a teen-based group to one comprised of young adults, ages 18-25. And with our mission of offer advocacy opportunities to young men and women from across the United States, a name change that better represents the group is on the horizon.